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AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PRETORIA 20502

LONDON FOR MCKINLEY; PARIS FOR FENDRICK
NSC FOR ROBERT FRASURE

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: THE SAG-ANC RELATIONSHIP: A YEAR END PERSPECTIVE

[1](#)1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

[1](#)2. A NEW MOOD OF UNCERTAINTY HAS SETTLED OVER SOUTH AFRICA FOLLOWING A YEAR OF UNPRECEDENTED POLITICAL CHANGE. AFTER A PROMISING START, NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ANC HAVE BOGGED DOWN. DISTRUST HAS DEEPENED, FUELED BY ANC SUSPICIONS THAT THE SAG IS TRYING TO PROFIT FROM ESCALATING TOWNSHIP VIOLENCE. FOR ITS PART, THE SAG BLAMES THE LACK OF MOVEMENT TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ANC'S LACK OF ORGANIZATION AND ON DIVISIONS INSIDE THE MOVEMENT.

[1](#)3. THESE PROBLEMS ARE MANAGEABLE PROVIDED THE TWO SIDES DEVELOP A RENEWED SENSE OF URGENCY AND COMMON PURPOSE EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR. THAT IMPERATIVE IS UNDERSTOOD AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE ANC AND THE SAG, WE BELIEVE. AT LOWER LEVELS THE PERSPECTIVE IS LESS CLEAR. MANY ANC MILITANTS BELIEVE THEY HAVE CONCEDED A GREAT DEAL, ESPECIALLY IN AGREEING TO SUSPEND THE ARMED STRUGGLE, AND OBTAINED LITTLE FROM GOVERNMENT IN THE TALKS THUS FAR: E.G., THE PRISONERS ARE STILL NOT FREE, THE EXILES NOT YET HOME, AND UNPRECEDENTED LARGESCALE VIOLENCE IS CONTINUING. THE "COMRADES" ARE DEMANDING A MORE AGGRESSIVE ANC STANCE IN THE YEAR AHEAD. IN THE SAG THERE ARE ELEMENTS EAGER TO EXPLOIT SUPPOSED SCHISMS IN THE ANC-SACP-COSATU ALLIANCE. OTHERS APPEAR READY TO CAST ABOUT FOR DIFFERENT BLACK INTERLOCUTORS AND NEGOTIATE A NEW CONSTITUTION WITH THEM REGARDLESS OF THE ANC.

[1](#)4. BOTH SIDES CAN TAKE SOME SMALL COMFORT PERHAPS IN THAT EXTREMIST CHALLENGES FAILED TO MATERIALIZE IN [1](#)1990. TO THE RIGHT, THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS LOSING GROUND. THE PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS (PAC) DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE PULLING MILITANTS AWAY FROM THE ANC AS MANY PREDICTED IT WOULD. WHILE THERE IS PROMISE FOR PROGRESS IN 1991, THE YEAR IS ENDING ON A LESS OPTIMISTIC NOTE THAN THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 1990 MIGHT HAVE LED ONE TO EXPECT. END SUMMARY.

DE KLERK'S THREE-PRONGED OFFENSIVE

15. THREE DISTINCT PROCESSES WERE EITHER INITIATED OR INTENSIFIED BY DE KLERK IN 1990:

-- POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION. THE UNBANNING OF THE ANC AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, THE LIFTING OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, THE REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY, AND THE RELEASE OF NELSON MANDELA AND MANY POLITICAL DETAINEES COMPLETELY CHANGED THE NATURE OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS. DE KLERK HAS, IN EFFECT, GIVEN THE ANC, THE SACP, THE PAC AND OTHERS UNPRECEDENTED ROOM TO MANUEVER -- AND TO COMMIT MISTAKES -- WHILE REAPING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR HIS BOLD REFORMISM. CONTROL OF THE LIBERALIZATION AGENDA, AND THE CONTENT AND TIMING OF REFORMS, HAS REMAINED ENTIRELY IN GOVERNMENT'S HANDS.

-- THE SCRAPPING OF APARTHEID. HERE TOO DE KLERK HAS DICTATED THE PACE OF REFORM. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT BY MID-1991 ALL THE MAIN PILLARS OF APARTHEID, POSSIBLY EVEN THE POPULATION REGISTRATION ACT, WILL HAVE BEEN LEGISLATED OUT OF EXISTENCE. WHITES HAVE ADJUSTED BETTER THAN EXPECTED (SO FAR, AT LEAST) TO THE REMOVAL OF RACIAL BARRIERS, ALTHOUGH 1991 IS LIKELY TO SEE EFFORTS TOWARD LOCAL AND INFORMAL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION.

-- NEGOTIATIONS FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION. AT THE PRETORIA SUMMIT AUGUST 6, THE SAG AND ANC DELEGATIONS DECLARED THAT THE WAY WAS OPEN FOR THE START OF SERIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER, THE SAG-ANC DIALOGUE BOGGED DOWN, AND FOR THE PAST FOUR MONTHS THE SAG HAS VACILLATED BETWEEN DIALOGUE WITH THE ANC AND MEASURES TO WEAKEN THE ANC. DE KLERK CAN PRESS FORWARD ON REFORM AND LIBERALIZE UNILATERALLY IN 1991, BUT HE WILL AT SOME POINT COME UNDER PRESSURE TO BEGIN SERIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS, EVEN WITHOUT ANC PARTICIPATION (WHICH IN OUR VIEW WOULD BE A GRAVE ERROR). THE ANC WILL CLAIM NEGOTIATIONS CANNOT BEGIN UNTIL PRE-CONDITIONS AND "STUMBLING BLOCKS" HAVE BEEN REMOVED AND, IN THIS RESPECT, HAS GIVEN THE SAG UNTIL APRIL 30 TO REMOVE THEM. IF THEY ARE NOT REMOVED, THE ANC HAS SAID IT WILL RECONSIDER ITS COMMITMENT TO NEGOTIATIONS AND THE SUSPENSION OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE.

NEGOTIATIONS BOGGED DOWN

16. IT IS THE STALLED NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS WHICH MOST WORRIES OBSERVERS. BEHIND IT LIES AN EROSION OF TRUST BETWEEN SAG AND ANC NEGOTIATORS AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT PERHAPS, BETWEEN MANDELA AND DE KLERK PERSONALLY. THIS EROSION BEGAN IN AUGUST AND IS CONTINUING. IT IS LINKED TO THE TOWNSHIP VIOLENCE, WHICH MOST ANC LEADERS FIRMLY BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPLOITING FOR ITS OWN POLITICAL ENDS. MANDELA NOW CLAIMS THERE IS A SAG "DOUBLE AGENDA" -- NEGOTIATIONS TO PLACATE PUBLIC OPINION COUPLED WITH A CONSPIRACY TO DIVIDE AND WEAKEN THE ANC. FROM A SAG PERSPECTIVE, THE PROBLEM IS THE ANC'S DISORGANIZATION, ITS INABILITY TO CONTROL ITS FOLLOWERS AND, ULTIMATELY, ITS RELUCTANCE TO MAKE DECISIONS AND STICK WITH THEM. RESTORING A MEASURE OF COMMON PURPOSE AND INSTILLING A NEW SENSE OF URGENCY WILL BE ESSENTIAL IN THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1991 IF THE NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS IS TO BE KEPT ON TRACK.

17. MODERATES ON BOTH SIDES REALIZE THAT THERE IS NO LONG-RUN ALTERNATIVE TO NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT POWER-SHARING. THERE IS NO "RETURN TO THE LAAGER" OPTION FOR WHITE SOUTH AFRICA. THERE IS NO REAL ARMED STRUGGLE OPTION FOR THE ANC. IN THAT SENSE, POLITICAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA IS TRULY IRREVERSIBLE.

18. WHAT HAS BECOME LESS CLEAR IN THE FINAL MONTHS OF 1990 IS WHETHER THE SOUTH AFRICA'S TWO MAIN PLAYERS WILL RE-ENGAGE PROMPTLY IN EARLY 1991 OR WHETHER THE

NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS WILL CONTINUE TO BE ON HOLD. FOR THE ANC, RIDDLED WITH ORGANIZATIONAL, FINANCIAL AND CONSTITUENT PROBLEMS, THERE WILL BE A STRONG EFFORT TO REFOCUS ITS RESOURCES ON REBUILDING ITS NEGLECTED TIES TO GRASSROOTS SUPPORTERS AND PROMOTING BLACK UNITY, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE WEEKEND'S CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE. "MASS ACTION" PROTEST WILL FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN SUCH A STRATEGY. MANY IN THE ANC, AND MORE ESPECIALLY IN THE SACP, APPEAR TO BELIEVE THAT SUCH MUSCLE-FLEXING IS ESSENTIAL IF THE ANC IS TO HAVE ANY CLOUT AT ALL AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. THE SAG, FOR ITS PART, WILL DEMAND THAT THE ANC DISTANCE ITSELF FROM BOYCOTTS, STRIKES AND STAYAWAYS WHICH HAVE VIOLENT POTENTIAL. IF A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION CAN BE ENGENDERED, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ANC ACTION COULD BE CHANNLED THOUGHTFULLY INTO PEACEFUL MASS DEMONSTRATIONS, ALLOWING THE ANC TO FLEX ITS MUSCLE AND PLACE PRESSURE ON THE SAG, WITHOUT UNDERMINING THE PROCESS. BUT THIS WOULD REQUIRE ENORMOUS RESTRAINT ON BOTH SIDES.

NO REAL CHALLENGE TO THE NATS AND THE ANC

¶9. DESPITE THESE UNCERTAINTIES, BOTH THE ANC AND SAG HAVE AT LEAST ONE IMPORTANT SUCCESS TO CELEBRATE AS THE YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE. POLITICAL THREATS FROM BOTH THE FAR RIGHT AND FROM THE FAR LEFT PROVED MUCH LESS FORMIDABLE THAN ORIGINALLY FEARED. THIS VICTORY, UNFORTUNATELY, IS PARTLY OFFSET BY UNPRECEDENTED VIOLENCE.

¶10. A SERIOUS CONSERVATIVE PARTY CHALLENGE TO DE KLERK HAS YET TO MATERIALIZE. CP LEADERS HAVE FAILED TO COME UP WITH PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVES TO DE KLERK'S REFORMS. OCTOBER POLLS SHOW THE CP SLIPPING BACK TO ONLY 25 PERCENT OF THE WHITE VOTE WHILE THE NATIONAL PARTY SUPPORT ROSE TO SLIGHTLY OVER 50 PERCENT. IN A PINCH, DE KLERK COULD PROBABLY COUNT ON THE BACKING OF ALMOST ALL THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY VOTES. HIS POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE WHITE ELECTORATE, AND WITHIN THE NATIONAL PARTY, IS STRONGER THAN EVER.

¶11. SIMILARLY, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT CLAIMS THAT THE ANC IS LOSING SUPPORT TO MORE MILITANT BLACK ORGANIZATIONS ON THE LEFT SUCH AS THE PAC. WHILE THE ANC HAS DOUBTLESS LOST SOME SUPPORT (RECENT INDEPENDENT AND GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED POLLS BOTH INDICATE THAT BLACK SUPPORT FOR THE ANC HAS SOFTENED CONSIDERABLY), THESE APPEAR TO BE LOSSES TO APATHY OR INDIFFERENCE, NOT DEFECTIONS TO THE PAC. DESPITE THESE SETBACKS, THE ANC'S PRE-EMINENCE AMONG OPPOSITION GROUPS REMAINS UNQUESTIONED. MOREOVER, ANC LOSSES CAN BE MADE UP QUICKLY. OPTIMAL FROM MANDELA'S POINT OF VIEW WOULD BE A STRATEGY WHICH TRANSFORMS PEACEFUL MASS ACTION INTO INCREASED LEVERAGE AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE.

SAG SCORES IN WORLD CAPITALS

¶12. IN ONE CRITICAL AREA IN 1990, SAG GAINS WERE ANC LOSSES. FOR MANY YEARS THE DIPLOMATIC QUARANTINE OF SOUTH AFRICA BY MOST OF THE THE THIRD WORLD AND COMMUNIST BLOC WAS A KEY INGREDIENT IN ANC-ORCHESTRATED PRESSURE ON PRETORIA. IN 1990 THE QUARANTINE CRUMBLLED. THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CLAIMS IT IS UNABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE MANY CONTACT OPPORTUNITIES ON OFFER. THE LOSS OF ITS VETO OVER MANY FORMS OF INTERNATIONAL CONTACT WITH PRETORIA IS A BLOW TO THE ANC. THE LIFTING OF AT LEAST SOME SANCTIONS BY WESTERN DEMOCRACIES IS AN INEVITABLE NEXT STEP IN 1991, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE WEEKEND'S EC DECISION TO LIFT THE BAN ON INVESTMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA. THE ANC HAS NOT MOVED DECISIVELY TO SET NEW TERMS UNDER WHICH IT WOULD APPROVE A LIFTING OF

SANCTIONS, AN OMISSION WHICH FURTHER REDUCES ITS
LEVERAGE WITH THE SAG. (OLIVER TAMBO WAS OBVIOUSLY
AWARE OF THIS WHEN HE ASKED THE ANC CONSULTATIVE
CONFERENCE TO REVIEW THE ENTIRE SANCTIONS ISSUE, BUT
THE MILITANT ASSEMBLY, WEARILY OF TOWNSHIP VIOLENCE AND
DISTRUSTFUL OF THE SAG, REJECTED ANY SUGGESTION OF
LIFTING SANCTIONS.)

COMMENT

¶13. NO ONE EXPECTED THE SAG AND ANC TO BE ON A QUICK
AND STRAIGHT COURSE TOWARDS POWER-SHARING NEGOTIATIONS
BY THE END OF 1990. THE LOSS OF BOTH MOMENTUM AND A
CLEAR SENSE OF DIRECTION IS NEVERTHELESS A
DISAPPOINTMENT. IF THIS DEADLOCK PERSISTS BEYOND
MID-1991, THERE IS A REAL DANGER THAT THAT THIS UNEASY
PARTNERSHIP WILL TURN OPENLY CONFRONTATIONAL. THE
MAIN REASON FOR OPTIMISM IS THAT NEITHER THE SAG NOR
THE ANC HAS ANY PLAUSIBLE LONG-TERM OPTION OTHER THAN
NEGOTIATIONS. WE STILL BELIEVE THEY WILL SEIZE THIS
OPTION, BUT THE WAY AHEAD WILL BE ROUGH. END COMMENT.

SWING.